

# AVAC Public Meeting

4/5/25

(Animas Valley Action Coalition)

**Darlene Koontz** (AVAC Coordinating Committee) opened the public meeting at 10 AM

- Welcome remarks to a packed room at Durango public library (approximately 120 attendees)
- Brief history of AVAC organization including 1<sup>st</sup> gathering at the Grange in 03/2023, Attendees indicating willingness to support founding a coordinated Coalition for public action regarding proposed developments and zoning issues in the Animas Valley, establishing AVAC coordinating committee, development of email member list, request for donations and retaining legal counsel. April 2025 is AVAC's 4<sup>th</sup> public meeting.
- 300+ current members on the mailing list
- AVAC's stated mission "To give residents a voice concerning development occurring in the Animas Valley"
- Introduction of the current coordinating committee Darlene Koontz, Brenda Fernandez, Tom Penn, Dave Sanderlin, Sheila Lee and Louis Meyer
- Ground Rules presented for those wishing to speak
- Robert Roberts Resorts request to speak at this meeting discussed and AVAC suggested he contact La Plata County Planning Commission to set up a neighborhood meeting
- La Plata County public meeting with Roberts Resorts scheduled for 4/29/25 at the fairgrounds in Durango
- Call for all interested AVAC members to attend

**Tom Penn** (AVAC accomplishments to date)

- public meetings, 300+ members
- public website with links to documents and comment submittal
- legal representation (Grand Junction firm)
- monitoring Robert Roberts' submittals
- organized "listening sessions", small group coffee klatch meetings
- worked with RDAC, Animas Valley Registered District Advisory Committee
- AVAC attending La Plata County Commission Meetings
- Letters to the Editor Campaign, Durango Herald

**Brenda Fernandez** (summarize RR 2<sup>nd</sup> submittal)

- lack of length of stay limit (60 Day limit required)
- installation of park models, tiny homes, permanent structures is out of compliance

- Fire Department response indicates the possibility of no protection availability
- proposed density grossly exceeds required maintaining existing rural density
- traffic study ignores large increase in traffic volume, size of luxury RV vehicles, bicycle, pedestrian and golf cart conflicts, limited sight lines and narrow blind curves
- disregard for existing use compatibility required by La Plata County Land Use Code 70.5 III D
- Planned installation of 275 units, including 214 30' back-in RV stalls versus permanent structure Park Models
- lack of infrastructure plan for fire protection needs
- South Dalton access conflicts, single entrance blind curve conflict
- sanitation issues with impacts on the Animas River and capacity limits for existing treatment capability
- Animas River existing historic launch site conflicts or elimination
- lighting impacts regarding night skies and surrounding existing residential areas
- lack of noise impact review and no existing County ordinance
- RR's 2<sup>nd</sup> submittal under review by La Plata County contracted Senior Planner , Tez Hawkins (Denver)

**Anita Rancatti** (Regional District Advisory Committee RDAC - Land Use Plan LUP)

- RDAC was formed in 2020 and holds annual meetings
- in 1992 Animas Valley residents submitted request for zoning restrictions following the development of Dalton Ranch
- 1993 Animas Valley Land Use Plan was approved and added to the La Plata Land Use Plan
- 2016-17 Administrative amendments were quietly added to the LUP eliminating Major Use categories and substituting a Special Use Permit category
- 2020 Animas Valley residents questioned the change making the Special Use category a minor development in the LUC, eliminating La Plata County Board of County Commissioners Review
- 2023-24 extensive research by Dot Wehrly (RDAC) uncovered the detailed record of the 2017 reclassification which allowed a Special Use Class II category Major application to be labeled as a Special Use Class I permit and be heard by the La Plata Planning Commission instead of the La Plata Board of County Commissioners (BOCC)
- This is how RR's initial Special Use application with major compliance, compatibility, traffic, density, public safety and wildlife/natural resource issues avoided the prior existing requirement for the Special Use Class II, Major applications to be heard by the BOCC

- La Plata Planning Commission director has avoided submitting RDAC request for review and changes to these altered amendments
- a letter to the editor campaign regarding these changes is needed
- BOCC needs to hear from Animas Valley residents at meetings and through comments submitted to let them know we are not pleased with the 2017 zoning/planning changes and desire transparency in the process to rectify the zoning deficiencies

**Louis Meyer** (vision for the future of Animas Valley)

- Lewis currently resides on County Road 250 in a multi-generation Animas Valley Family Farm and is a retired civil and water engineer
- AVAC held Listening Sessions-small group coffee klatch to develop a community approach
- We should learn from other CO community experiences, Aspen, Vail Valley and Crested Butte
- CO is currently at 6 million population and growing by 6% annually
- we need a coordinated action plan to portray current conditions and the inevitable Growth and Development impacts
- Animas Valley is a unique resource with significant values including historic buildings, orchards, landscapes and lifestyles
- Transportation and Utility corridors need to be mapped and planned efficiently
- Community Action can build trust and yield creativity
- Open Spaces, Riparian Habitat, Wildlife Habitat, Agricultural Heritage, Dark Skies, Elk Herd migration, Ridgeline Protection, Bicycle and Pedestrian Safety all need to be considered
- Applications for funding grants will be required
- Economic incentives for landowner conservation easements
- Consultation professional landscape planners is necessary
- Uniting various entities and stakeholders will yield positive results

**Dave Sanderlin** (donation status, legal representation and website)

- Donations to AVAC have raised over \$20,000 (avg donation \$200)
- Have spent \$4600 to date on legal representation (Hoskin, Farina, Kampf Land Use Legal Firm)
- AVAC website [avaccdurango.org](http://avaccdurango.org) has been updated and includes a link for donations and links to documents and comment pages for La Plata's BOCC and La Plata Planning

### Attendee Question & Answer Session

- Diane – Are the documents displayed and discussed at this meeting available? Answer – Yes, on the AVAC website and with links to La Plata County, PowerPoint slides the meeting will be added to the website
- Sam – commented the Animas River put in by the Trimble bridge is the only river access north of Durango and its loss would eliminate all public access to the north Animas River
- Dan – enjoys the Animas Valley and suggest convincing RR to relocate his RV Park plans would be the best solution for all. Answer – Louis replied he agreed and discussed the need for significant funding and major community action required
- Molly-commented she was involved in 1992 La Plata/Animas Valley zoning efforts and suggested a community effort to develop funding to buy out RR. Answer – call was made for a show of hands of all that would consider donating to a buyout fund, a nearly unanimous positive response was indicated
- Adrian-express concern over the potential loss of the Animas River put in/launch and the potential for invasive species if the launch continued unmonitored and uncontrolled
- Tina – suggested bringing our concerns to our political representatives and expanding our submitted comments. Answer – Anita reiterated the lack of response and refusal to address public concerns by officials
- Tami - agreed with the idea to develop funding through donations to incentivize landowners regarding conservation easements
- Robert – Compared AVAC efforts and plight to the Wolf Creek ski area development proposals he had been opposing for 20 years and suggested AVAC members propose alternate sites at the La Plata public meeting with RR on 4/29/25
- Jim – suggested asking political representatives to attend the public meeting and address the issues
- Bob – wanted to stress the dangers of wildfire and lack of evacuation routes
- Jim - suggested making efforts to make the donation link on the website obvious and easy and placed on the 1<sup>st</sup> page of the website and bright colors
- Cove Resident – ask why Plata BOCC was taking the lack of concern position  
Answer – newer councilmembers unfamiliar with complex zoning issues and under pressure from competing issues and unaware of the Animas Valley zoning problem, we need large attendance at their meetings, letters and comments to bring this to their attention, Louis commented they were restricted from certain types of meetings with stakeholders due to ex parte considerations
- Jerry – commented on the beauty, salinity and solitude of residing in South Dalton and concern of the noise/lights and traffic resulting from RR's proposal

- Robert – noted the lack adequate and appropriate ordinances and suggested proposing a moratorium on development until such applicable ordinances and zoning could be implemented
- Hwy 250 resident – commented that traffic was already significant to the point of being dangerous at the concerned intersections and an increase with heavy luxury RVs would be disastrous
- Animas Valley resident – commented that her family-owned agricultural acreage and was depending on that for future income and the need for financial incentives to prevent development was imperative, she emphasized the need to support existing agricultural operations and housing for their farm workers

Meeting adjourned at 11:40 AM